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ABSTRACT

Described is a media exercise which involved social studies curriculum specialists department chairmen, and classroom teachers in the Baltimore County Public Schools. The exercise was designed and utilized as a model of the content and processes that should be involved in developing an international perspective in social studies programs. The exercise served as a model in that it raised the kinds of questions that must precede curriculum decision-making; it encouraged the type of setting and stimulated the dialogue necessary to the success of this task. Participant discussion, as well as an examination of recent social studies and area studies projects pointed up the essentially regional or cultural construct that serves as a framework for the "international studies" of students. Two frames of reference for social studies programs which seek to prepare pupils to function effectively are suggested: 1) a global systems view; and, 2) the world of "probable futures". Others mentioned include: studies of decision-making and conflict resolutions in settings like the Cuban Missile Crisis; and comparative studies of such global phenomena as political development, social, and economic change, etc. It is not the presence of the traditional, regional, and cultural framework that is opposed here, but the near dominance of that approach in "international studies". (JSB)

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GIVING AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE TO SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION

An Illustration of Curriculum Processes

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On several recent occasions, social studies curriculum specialists, department chairmen, and classroom teachers in the Baltimore County Public Schools have had the unusual experience of viewing three motion pictures simultaneously. Though the idea of simultaneous, multiple visual experiences is not new - its use in this instance to raise questions about social studies curriculum and instruction - is a departure from practice. The films viewed include:

Bozo Daily Life, a 16 mm, non-narrated, color film, produced by Julien Bryan's International Film Corporation, shows the activities of the Bozo people of the Niger River. They "quietly emerge from their thatched huts while dawn slowly breaks over the Niger. Birds glide against the soft, red sky as the men man the boats and the women begin their daily activities at the water's edge. These black Africans are then shown as they fish, weave, cook, and mill rice - the activities which form the backbone for their daily lives." [1]

Juggernaut, this production of the National Film Board of Canada, traces the route of an atomic reactor through India to its destination at Kota, south of Jaipur. At the same time it depicts the presence of change along side much that is traditional in India. [2]

> In Spite of Walls, produced and distributed by the Volkswagon Company. The theme is the degree to which economic and social developments have broken down many of the traditional barriers to communication between peoples and are examples of how the world is becoming an interconnected economic and social system.[3]

After viewing the three films for about fifteen minutes the large groups were divided into several small discussion groups and asked to consider three questions:

> What does the world look like?
>
> Which view is more accurate?
>
> Which view has exerted the most influence on the curriculum?

Many individuals involved in the small group discussions rejected the notion that there was one or even several views of the world that were more accurate and thus constituted the world views to be considered in the curriculum. Frequently it was pointed out, that in addition to the world of our culture, or the world of "their" culture, there exists other worlds such as the world of "self," and a world characterized by multiple cross-cultural relationships and influences.

Of particular interest were responses to the question, "Which view has influenced the curriculum?" The great majority of participants concluded that the view presented by In Spite of Walls, a western, technologically advanced world, has exerted the most influence. The world of other cultures coming to

to terms with their environment and creating distinctive life-styles, or a world characterized by numerous cross-cultural contacts and resulting cultural adjustments, were perceived as having exercised significantly less influence on curriculum and instruction.

An interesting exercise, but what value does it possess for social studies educators constantly pressed by professional groups desiring to introduce their special interests in social studies instruction, by a public increasingly disenchanted by the apparent failure of schools' responsibilities to society, and by teachers and students possessing often atagonistic views of what is relevant in the classroom.Pressured in each instance to "get on with it!" The value of this type of activity is that it forces the participant to confront his own, often narrow set of assumptions about the nature of the world out there. Narrow in the sense that it can be predicted with a high degree of accuracy which world views will be considered and which will escape attention.

It would seem axiomatic that if we seek to teach and learn something about the varied nature of human conduct on this planet, then we ought to invest time and effort confronting that variety and asking what it is we need to know to understand it. This consideration must precede the making of decisions about the what, the where, the when, and the how. Furthermore, this consideration should encompass the total social studies curriculum, K-12, not just one small segment of it. To do otherwise, it would seem, is to run the great risk of perpetuating limited and even outdated world views precisely at a time when we need timely and vital insights into a rapidly changing world.

The media exercise was designed and utilized because it serves as a model of the content and processes that should be involved in developing an International Perspective in the social studies program. A model of content and process in that it raises the kinds of questions that must precede curriculum decision-making; it encourages the type of setting and stimulates the dialogue necessary to the success of this task; it points to the disciplines of history, geography, and the social sciences wherein valuable insights for social studies educators may await discovery; and it suggests some of the ideas, concepts, strategies we may select to structure a variety of international and intercultural experiences for students.

If we grant that we should expose our minds to numerous possible pictures of the world prior to curriculum decision-making, what then are some traditional and innovative patterns of perceiving and structuring international and intercultural behavior?

The media experience was predicted on the assumption that initially we will react in terms of "our" culture and "others" cultures, or of some cultures operating in relative isolation while others interact with each other. This was reflected in many participant's classification of these films as illustrative of traditional societies, transitional societies, and developed societies. Others saw technologically advanced, economically developed, politically and socially modernized western nations, and economically underdeveloped, politically and socially tradition-bound non-western societies. Some few saw societies that could "do their own thing" while others were constantly impinged upon by outside forces. Most participants felt that curriculum and instruction emphasized a world view consistant with our own culture's present condition, technologically advanced, economically developed, politically and socially modernized, at the expense of consideration of life

styles of traditional societies, or the experiences of peoples and societies undergoing profound change.

As the discussion progressed it became apparent that although participants acknowledged the existive and pervasive influence of these several world views, they were unable to go beyond and suggest alternative structures that might yield interesting insights. Greater depth and sophistication of treatment in existing history, geography, and area studies programs were offered as solutions. In that sense they are part of a silent concensus that seems to characterize the response of curriculum projects, media publishers, and many concerned social studies educators when they confront the question of what we need to do in the international education.

By silent concensus attention is called to the marked tendency by these varied groups to transmit through suggested curricular structures or instructional materials developed, an essentially limited regional or cultural construct. This construct is in turn discovered and adopted by social studies educators to serve as the framework for the "international studies" of students. An examination of the recent "A Critical Appraisal of Twenty-Six National Social Studies Projects," published in Social Education, indicates a number of projects that include international dimensions, but few that see the world other than in a world cultures context.[4] For example, the otherwise excellent World Studies Inquiry Series or Asian Studies Inquiry Program while incorporating numerous possibilities for study of cross-cultural or global systems phenomena are organized as regional studies. This requires social studies curriculum decision-makers, and social studies teachers to project alternate frames of reference and to impose them on regionally oriented instructional materials.

Without awareness and understanding of a variety of possible alternatives, is this likely to happen? If past practice is a reliable indicator, the answer is "No." As Lee Anderson has recently concluded:

> "A survey of the curriculum guides, teaching materials and approaches used in many schools suggests that much of our past and present teaching is grounded on an image of the world as a mosaic of richly varied lands and peoples. An anthropologist examining the artifacts of American education in an effort to reconstruct the culturally shared world-views of Americans might well conclude that we tend to see the world as a kind of pool table on whose green surface are found an array of scattered and self-contained billiard balls of various colors. Similarly, international education has been largely a matter of instructing the young about many colorful lands and peoples other than ourselves -- of providing them with some information about the different ecologies, the particular histories and the unique cultures of a few of the different balls arrayed about the table's surface. Clearly this is an excessively simplified picture, but perhaps not an entirely gross caricature of the international dimension of the curriculum found in many American Schools."[5]

Careful consideration by social studies educators of a variety of ways of organizing international studies seems warranted.

The Apollo flights have dramatized that different perspectives of this planet and its peoples are possible. Colonel Frank Borman, Commander of Apollo 8, in an eloquent statement made during a recent interview, suggested dimensions of this emerging world perspective:

> "....I found a very fervent response from Europeans to our common desires for peace and brotherhood as stimulated by our first view of our common planet from afar. The overwhelming impression of the people of Europe was this view that we got of earth. They seemed intently interested in the fact that there are no barriers and that the success of this mission was due in large measure to the contributions made by people all the world over. They respond to the fact that we are really riders on the earth together. And we share a beautiful planet. It is small and beautiful and fragile. Now I'm not naive enough to think that things like exploring the moon are going to take away the conflicts that exist on earth, but it helps give us a significant and common point of view. We on earth really have much more in common

> than we have in separation. To Europeans and Americans both, the overwhelming wonderment is why in the world we can't appreciate what we have."[6]

However, the restructuring of an image of the world is not the product of a single epic event. C. E. Black, the historian, has commented, "We are now experiencing one of the great revolutionary transformations of mankind. The turn in human affairs now taking place is of a scope and intensity that man has experienced on only two previous occasions and its significance cannot be appreciated except in the context of the entire course of world affairs."[7]

One perspective, a "system's view" if you will, seems to offer much to social studies curriculum decision-makers. Political scientist, Lee Anderson, in a recent Foreign Policy Association study, identifies several trends evidenced by social science research that suggest growth of "systemness" of the modern world. "The 'unity,' the 'wholeness,' the 'experience,' the 'systemness' of the modern world -- whatever may be the favorite word, -- is manifest in a number of ways...

1. An expanding network of cross-national organizations and associations ... there is no question that the twentieth century is witnessing a very sharp expansion in the volume and scope of interactions among the world's hundreds of national and local societies.

2. An expanding volume of world-wide human interactions ... in our time the globe has become encircled by an expanding grid of organizations and associations cutting across boundaries of national systems.

3. Increasing similarity in mankind's social behavior and institutions .... another way of putting this is to say that modern technology in communications and transportation is creating a pool of socio-cultural forms at the global level from which all of the human species can draw in varying degrees.

4. The internationalization of social problems ... the growing interconnectedness of people has among its consequences the internationalization of many aspects of man's ageless problems of survival. The pollution of air and water, the

> proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the plundering of the planet's mineral resources are only a few of the problems that cannot be tackled effectively, much less solved, by unilateral measure of nation-states."

He concludes, "these are a few and only a few of the many characteristics of modern history that lead to a view of the world as a single global system comprised of many interacting regional, national, and local systems."[8]

Another frame of reference, that of the study of "probable futures" should be considered. Working on the assumption that several "recent" developments will continue to exert considerable influence for the balance of this century, it is argued that students should be aware of the ways these might influence their future, and experience in the classroom alternative means of responding to these challenges.

Robert C. North, in a paper prepared for the same Foreign Policy Association study of the present state of education for International understanding has enumerated six technological revolutions with capacities for profoundly effecting mankind: nuclear power and weaponry, space exploration, instant verbal and visual communications, supersonic transportation, cybernetic systems, the prolongation, the enhancement and the creation of life. The enormity of the challenges posed by these developments is staggering. This technology, in the form of the organization and utilization of man's knowledge, skills, and tools provides us with unprecedented alternatives and opportunities to increase man's personal development and self-fulfillment. Unfortunately, these same technologies could result in greatly increased misery and possible self-destruction of mankind.

The important thing to note is that the future is not predetermined by

forces already set in motion. North suggests, however, that there are contingency factors which can have an impact on the shape of the next half century. Foremost among these is education. "It will make a significant difference, " writes North, "how human beings are educated all over the world, but especially, perhaps, in the technologically more advanced nations of the world including the United States. The behaviors of people everywhere will depend crucially upon the ways in which they are taught to perceive and interpret the universe, the earth and its envelope, the world community, their own respective nations, themselves, their families, and their roles, statuses, and functions in these various, more or less overlapping or nesting organizations, milieus, contexts, and systems."[9]

A social studies program that seeks to prepare pupils to function effectively as adults must address itself to these concerns. The frames of reference just suggested, a global systems view, and the world of "probable futures," are but two ways of looking at the world that have an important contribution to make toward this end. Others that would seem to deserve the serious considerations of social studies educators include: studies of decision-making and conflict resolutions in settings like the Cuban Missile Crisis; comparative studies of such global phenomena as political development, social and economic change; and world order studies that "focuses directly and primarily on the questions of how to reduce significantly the likelihood of international violence and to create tolerable conditions of world-wide economic welfare and social justice. In more connotative but less precise terminology, the question reads, "How to achieve and maintain a warless and more just world?"[10]

It would be a misreading of interest if these later points of view were to replace more traditional, regional, and cultural frames of references in social studies curriculum and instruction. The point at issue here is not

the regional construct's accuracy or inaccuracy, but rather its near total dominance of the international strand of social studies instruction. It is important to recognize and convey that we live in more than a world of culture and region. We live in worlds that are subject to cross-cultural and systematic influences. As Raymond Platig has commented, "Civil disturbances in the Congo and in South Vietnam have their repercussions in New York, Moscow, and Peking; crop failure in India calls forth response from the American Midwest; nuclear explosive power unites men around the world in the fear of holocaust and the dread of environmental contamination ... the interrelatedness of life of man among men, it would seem, is forcing itself upon our attention in new dimensions and with renewed insistence."[11]

We live, as John Robinson has concluded in a study on public awareness of international issues in which "... the vast majority of citizens hold pictures of the world that are at best sketchy, blurred, and without detail or at worst so impoverished as to beggar description."[12] We live in worlds in which what we know is distorted and inaccurate. As Project Africa has reported, "To American seventh and twelfth graders, Africa south of the Sahara, seems to be a primitive, backward, underdeveloped land with no history -- a hot, strange land of jungles and deserts, populated with wild animals such as elephants, tigers, and snakes, and by black, naked savages, cannibals and pygmies. Missionaries and witch doctors vie for control of the natives, who live in villages, are prone to superstition and disease, and who hunt with spears and poison darts when not sitting in front of their huts beating on drums."[13]

And, finally, we live in a world in which, as Barbara Ward has written,

"We have become a single human community. Most of the energies of our society tend towards unit -- the energy of science and technological change, the energy of curiosity and research, of self-interest and economics, the energy - in many ways the most violent of them all - the energy of potential aggression and destruction. We have become neighbors in terms of inescapable physical proximity and instant communication. We are neighbors in economic interest and technological direction. We are neighbors in facets of our industrialization and in the pattern of our urbanization. The atomic bomb would rain down on the just and unjust, on the Communist and non-Communist, on the slave and on the free, and could leave us all with our last appalling unity - the unity of annihilation."[14]

These questions have been raised and these points of view explored because response to such questions and recognition of such ideas and insights is essential in developing a realistic comprehensive international strand in the social studies curriculum. To do otherwise is to insure that curriculum revisionists will comfortingly discover "that's what we've been doing all along." In our time that is unlikely and deceiving.

FOOTNOTES

1 Bozo Daily Life, 16 mm., color, 15 min., non-narrated. International Film Foundation, Inc., New York 1970

2 Juggernaut, 16 mm., color, 28 min, sound. National Film Board of Canada 1968

3 In Spite of Walls, 16 mm., color, 30 min., sound. Folkswagen of America, Lanham, Maryland 1970

4 Norris Sanders and Marlin Tanck, "A Critical Appraisal of 26 National Social Studies Projects." Social Education (NCSS, Washington, D.C.) Vol.34 #4 April, 1970, pp. 383-447

5 Lee Anderson, "An Examination of the Structure and Objectives of International Education," Social Education (NCSS, Washington, D.C.) Vol. 32 #7, Nov. '68, p. 639

6 An Interview with Colonel Frank Borman in This Week Magazine, The Baltimore Sun. (April 6, 1969) p. 15

7 C. E. Black, The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History. Harper Torch Books, New York 1967, p. 1

8 Anderson, op. cit., p. 640

9 Robert C. North. "The World of the Forthcoming Decades: A Pessimistic and Optimistic View." Social Education, (NCSS, Washington, D.C.) Vol. 32, Nov. '68, p. 670

10 Saul Mendlovitz, Definition of World Order, mimeo. World Law Fund, New York 1968

11 E. Raymond Platig. International Relations Research. Santa Barbara, California: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. pp. 2-3

12 John P. Robinson, "Public Information About World Affairs" quoted in Foreign News & World Views (New Dimesion, Foreign Policy Association, New York) 1968 p. 7

13 Barry Beyer, Perry Hicks, Images of Africa. A report on what American secondary school students know and believe about Africa, South of the Sahara. Project Africa, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pa. Fall, 1968 p. 19

14 Barbara Ward, Spaceship Earth. Columbia University Press, New York 1966, p. 14

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